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'A Pleasant Three Days in Philadelphia': Arguments for a Pseudopartitive Analysis

Abstract

Phrases like 'a pleasant three days', which take the obligatory form Article + Adjective + (Plural) Numeral + (Plural) Noun (AANN), present a problem for English nominal syntax. Typically, the English indefinite article A(N) is incompatible with either numerals or plural nouns; however, in AANN phrases, this co-occurrence is obligatory. This problem has remained largely unaddressed in the literature. In this paper, I account for the AANN construction by associating it with the pseudopartitive. I propose that there is covert functional structure between the article and the numeral in AANN, and that this functional apparatus corresponds to the Measure Phrase structure found in pseudopartitives: in other words, the noun phrase 'a pleasant three days' is underlyingly equivalent to 'a pleasant PERIOD of three days'. After providing a brief descriptive account of the properties of AANN in terms of distribution, agreement, and selectional restrictions, I motivate an AANN--pseudopartitive connection by relating the identified properties of AANN to known properties of the pseudopartitive as discussed in Keizer (2007). I then introduce a syntactic structure for the pseudopartitive which is modified from Stickney (2010), and show that the proposed structure can account for all the noted idiosyncrasies of the AANN construction, including the obligatory A-A-N-N order, the co-occurrence of the indefinite article and plural numeral, the obligatoriness of the adjective, and the semantic behavior of the AANN construction.

‘A Pleasant Three Days in Philadelphia’: Arguments for a Pseudopartitive Analysis

Caitlin Keenan*

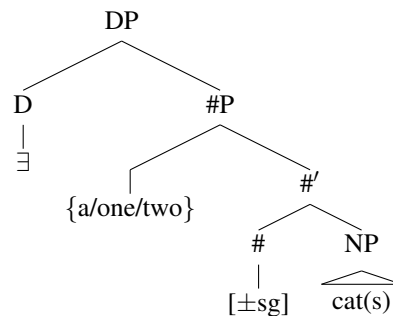
1 An Introduction To The Problem

It is a widely-observed fact of Modern English that the indefinite article *a(n)* is incompatible with both cardinal numerals (1a) and plural nouns (1b):

- (1) a. *a one week, *a two week(s), *a ten week(s)
b. *a days, *a men, *a cats

These facts are frequently accounted for by postulating that the indefinite article is a reduced form of the numeral ‘one’ (Perlmutter, 1970). In the context of current syntactic theory, this coincides with the proposal that *a(n)*, unlike its definite cousin *the*, is not a determiner in D^0 , but is rather the unstressed, default reflex of a lower functional projection associated with atomicity, singularity/plurality, and numerals.¹ This projection has received various names in the literature; I shall refer to it as $\#P$. Under this analysis, the element *a(n)* is merged in the Specifier to $\#P$, just like its numerical brethren *one* and *two*:

- (2) ‘a cat/one cat/two cats’²



Under such an account, it is straightforward to rule out the sentences in (1a–b): the article *a(n)* is incompatible with numerals because it is a numeral; it is incompatible with plural nouns because, as a reduced version of the numeral *one*, it is inherently singular.

However, there is at least one construction in Modern English for which the *a(n)*-as-numeral analysis makes a wrong prediction:

- (3) I spent **a pleasant three days** in Philadelphia last spring.

The sentence in (3) represents a peculiarly understudied structure in modern English, which is both unexplained and tightly constrained.³ It takes the obligatory form **Article + Adjective + Number + Noun**; I shall refer to this construction as the ‘**AANN**’ construction throughout this paper.

It is easy to see why the sentence in (3) is problematic. If we maintain the simple analysis of *a(n)*-as-numeral illustrated in (2) above, AANN sentences like the one in (3) should be impossible, since this construction permits exactly the co-occurrences (*an* + numeral; *an* + plural N) which the

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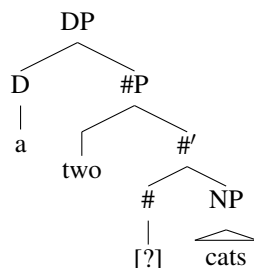
¹See for instance Lyons (1999), Wood (2003).

²It is immaterial for my account whether numerals are existentially closed at D, or whether the D head of indefinite noun phrases contains a choice function variable which is existentially closed higher up in the structure. For simplicity’s sake, I have adopted the former representation in the trees in (3).

³To my knowledge, the only previous consideration of this problem in the recent literature occurs in Ionin and Matushansky (2004) and Ionin and Matushansky (2006). These authors discuss the AANN construction as it pertains to their theory of numerals, and briefly defend a preliminary analysis of AANN within the context of that theory. For a rebuttal of their arguments, see the extended version of the present paper in Keenan (2012).

Perlmutterian analysis was developed to avoid. However, if we reanalyze *a(n)* as a true article in D^0 , we will permit the sentence in (3) only at the cost of falsely ruling in the clearly-ungrammatical sentences in (1a,b) as well:

- (4) ‘a two cats’



How can we allow sentences like (3) into the DP syntax without compromising our ability to rule out straightforwardly ungrammatical phrases like those in (1a–b)? In this paper, I account for the AANN construction by associating it with the pseudopartitive. Specifically, I propose that there is covert functional structure between the article and the numeral in the AANN construction, and that this functional apparatus corresponds to the ‘measure phrase’ structure found in pseudopartitives. Under this analysis, the noun phrase ‘a pleasant three days’ is underlying equivalent to ‘a pleasant **period of** three days’; I argue that AANN contains a covert measure head which encodes “group”-hood on the following noun phrase.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In **Section 2**, I provide a descriptive account of the properties of AANN in terms of distribution, agreement, and selectional restrictions. This section is, to my knowledge, a novel contribution to the descriptive literature on English noun phrases. In **Section 3**, I relate the identified properties of AANN to the properties of the pseudopartitive, as discussed in Keizer (2007), and show that there is good reason to motivate an AANN—pseudopartitive connection. In **Section 4**, I introduce a syntactic structure for the pseudopartitive based on Stickney (2010), and modify this structure slightly to accommodate the AANN data. Finally in **Section 5**, I return to the properties of AANN cataloged in Section 2 and show how the proposed structure can account for these idiosyncrasies.

2 Properties of AANN

Although fully productive within its semantic and structural confines, AANN is a tightly constrained construction in Modern English. This section catalogs the construction’s idiosyncrasies.⁴

2.1 Structure

The structural form of AANN is very restricted. Only the order (article + adjective + numeral + noun) is permitted; within this ordering, both the adjective and the numeral are obligatory:

- (5) a. *I spent **a pleasant weeks** in Banff last summer.
 b. *I spent **a three weeks** in Banff last summer.
 c. *I spent **a three pleasant weeks** in Banff last summer.

2.2 Verbal Agreement

Agreement between AANN and the verb can be either singular or plural:

- (6) a. A mere fifty cents for a cup of coffee **sounds**/*sound reasonable to me!
 b. A delicious four courses *was/**were** served in the main dining room.
 c. A healthy two runs weekly **was/were** prescribed by the doctor.

⁴There does not appear to be any previous detailed descriptive treatment of this problem in the literature. Accordingly, all data in this section are my own; sentence judgments have been checked against the intuitions of other native English speakers, both naive speakers and linguists.

2.3 Role of the Adjective

The AANN adjective may be *emphatic*, in which case it serves to intensify or downtone the force of the numeral (7a–b), or it may be *descriptive*, in which case it ascribes a property or characteristic to the subsequent noun phrase (7c–d):

- (7) a. He held his breath underwater for **a staggering ten minutes**.
- b. Terry Fox ran **an astonishing 3000 miles on one leg**.
- c. I ate **a delicious three courses** at my friend's restaurant this evening.
- d. We spent **a delightful four hours** together.

Emphatic and descriptive AANN behave somewhat differently with respect to a number of properties.⁵ In this paper, I focus exclusively on descriptive AANN in my analysis; however, the pseudopartitive analysis proposed here is extensible to emphatic AANN as well—see Keenan (2012) for details.

2.4 Selectional Restriction

Descriptive AANN occurs most naturally with nouns which measure. This is reflected in the examples in (5–7) above, where AANN felicitously selects such nouns as *weeks*, *cents*, *courses*, and *miles*. By contrast, this construction is degraded or infelicitous with nouns denoting discrete, concrete entities (8):

- (8) a. #I ate **a delicious three muffins** at my friend's restaurant this evening.
- b. #Charles met **a delightful four women** at the waterpark.

2.5 Semantic Interpretation

Descriptive AANN encodes a collectivity reading on the subsequent plural noun phrase. In the following situation, use of AANN (9b) is inappropriate because the three week-long periods are discrete and discontinuous:

- (9) Situation: I spent one week in Victoria in March, and then came back for a week in April and once again toward the end of June.
- a. I spent **three pleasant weeks** in Victoria last spring.
- b. *I spent **a pleasant three weeks** in Victoria last spring.

The intuition of native English speakers is that sentence (9b) is infelicitous in this context because the AANN phrase '*a pleasant three weeks*' requires the 'three weeks' to be interpreted as a *continuous unit*. In fact, it seems like the best paraphrase for this AANN construction is not a simple noun phrase like '*three pleasant weeks*', but rather a complex noun phrase like '*a pleasant period of three weeks*'. In other words, AANN seems to behave like a collection pseudopartitive. In the next section, I explore the nature and depth of this intuitive relationship between AANN and the pseudopartitive.

3 AANN versus the Pseudopartitive

Partitive-type phrases are identified in the literature as those nominal expressions which consist of a "measure" noun that takes a complement PP containing a measured item or substance. In 'true' partitives, the measured word is definite or specific—i.e., it is preceded by a determiner (10a); in a pseudopartitive, the measured word is non-specific—i.e., it consists of a bare plural or mass noun

⁵Specifically, emphatic AANN does not possess the same selectional restrictions (2.4) or collective interpretation (2.5) as descriptive AANN. It also exhibits a different focal stress pattern.

(10b).⁶ A third type of partitive structure, which I shall call the ‘low-number partitive’, contains a **quantified** measured noun (10c).

- (10) a. a collection of **those stories**
- b. a collection of **stories**
- c. a collection of **ten stories**

These low-number partitives are ‘in between’ the partitive and the pseudopartitive in a sense: they are not bare, like pseudopartitives, but neither are they definite or (necessarily) specific, like true partitives. The semantic & syntactic status of low-number partitives has, to my knowledge, never been directly discussed in the literature, and their (pseudo-)partitive allegiance has never been determined. The underlying structure that I am proposing for AANN is this low-number partitive structure: **a pleasant three days** \equiv **a pleasant period of three days**. It is therefore critical to my account that I determine whether such structures are in fact partitive or pseudopartitive.

3.1 Partitive or Pseudopartitive?

There are several syntactic tests which have traditionally been used to distinguish between partitives and pseudopartitives. In particular, partitives and pseudopartitives behave differently with respect to extraposition of certain elements. Extraposition of the **internal ‘of’ phrase** (the PP containing the measured noun) is grammatical in partitive constructions but ungrammatical in pseudopartitives. The contrast is illustrated in (11a–b) below. (11c–d) show extraposition of the same internal PP from a low-numeral partitive and an AANN construction, respectively. These sentences behave like the pseudopartitive (11b) in disallowing this extraposition operation.⁷

- (11) a. Only a handful were asked of those questions about global warming.
- b. *Only a handful were asked of questions about global warming.
- c. *Only a pitiful selection were asked of three questions about global warming.
- d. *Only a measly three were asked questions about global warming.

A second type of extraposition test also distinguishes between partitives and pseudopartitives. Here we look at extraposition of an **external PP complement or adjunct**; that is, a PP modifying the measured noun itself. The situation here is the converse of that seen for the first extraposition test above: partitives *disallow* extraposition of a PP complement to the low NP (12a), while pseudopartitives *permit* this type of extraposition (12b). Low-number partitives and AANN again pattern with the pseudopartitive in permitting extraposition of an external PP complement.

- (12) a. *A collection of those stories soon appeared about the Occupy movement.
- b. A collection of stories soon appeared about the Occupy movement.
- c. A collection of twenty stories soon appeared about the Occupy movement.
- d. A remarkable ten stories soon appeared about the Occupy movement.

In addition to their behavior with respect to extraposition, partitives and pseudopartitives can be distinguished based on the possibility of coreference with **restricted relative clauses**. A restricted relative clause following a true partitive may corefer with either the **measure** noun or the **measured** noun (13a); however, a restricted relative clause following a pseudopartitive must refer unambiguously to the phrase as a whole. Low-number partitives and AANN also have only one possible referent:

⁶Literature on the pseudopartitive has a long and varied history. Most of the discussion below has been drawn from Keizer (2007), whose discussion is in turn based largely on seminal work by Selkirk (1977).

⁷All partitive and pseudopartitive example sentences in this section are borrowed from (Keizer, 2007, 110ff). They were recovered initially from the ICE-GB corpus of (spoken and written) Modern English. Low-# and AANN sentences were produced by the author; the judgments given here are supported by a pilot survey of twelve naive native English speakers. It should be noted that few native English speakers whom I have spoken to find sentence (11a) fully acceptable. However, on direct comparison tasks most speakers prefer (11a) to (11b); moreover, as Keizer’s (2007) data show, examples like the one in (11a) are produced in corpora, whereas pseudopartitive examples like the one in (11b) apparently never occur. Grammaticality/acceptability judgments on the second extraposition test, discussed below, are much more robust for the speakers I consulted.

- (13) **Situation:** *Kelly wanted to buy some flowers for David to apologize for spilling wine on his carpet. While she was at the florist's shop examining flowers, she noticed that two of the florist's daffodils were faded.*
- Kelly bought David [a number of [those daffodils]_j]_i, two of which_{i,j} were faded.
 - Kelly bought David [a number of daffodils]_i, two of which_i were faded.
 - Kelly bought David [a bouquet of thirty daffodils]_i, two of which_i were faded.
 - Kelly bought David [a ridiculous sixty daffodils]_i, two of which_i were faded.

In the partitive construction in (a), ‘two of which’ can refer to either the purchased subset of daffodils (‘a number of those daffodils’) or the superset owned by the florist (‘those daffodils’). In the pseudopartitive and its ilk in (b–d), however, ‘two of which’ can only refer to the purchased subset (‘a number...’; ‘a bouquet...’; ‘a ridiculous sixty...’).

The three tests outlined above have been traditionally taken to indicate that a basic structural difference exists between partitives and pseudopartitives. On the balance of the examples introduced in (11–13,c–d), we can now further conclude that AANN constructions, as well as their low-number partitives paraphrases, are structurally akin to pseudopartitives. Before we turn to consider the details of pseudopartitive syntax in Section 4, I will introduce two additional pieces of evidence from Keizer (2007) which support the validity of the AANN–pseudopartitive connection.

3.2 Additional Support for the Pseudopartitive Hypothesis

- (14) **Variable verbal agreement:** If a pseudopartitive N1 is singular and N2 is plural, the verb can agree with either element (14a). We have already seen that this is also true of AANN (6b, repeated as 14b):
- A herd of large African elephants {was, were} stampeding towards us.
 - A healthy two runs weekly {was, were} prescribed by the doctor.
- (15) **Article agreement with N1:** The article in a pseudopartitive invariably agrees with N1 (15a); it cannot agree with N2 (15b). It is a curiosity of AANN that it obligatorily takes an indefinite article, regardless of the fact that the only overt noun (the ‘measured’ noun) is plural (15c):
- A number of members of staff have the same problem.
 - *Several number of members of staff have the same problem.
 - I spent a pleasant ? three days in Philadelphia last spring.

The observations discussed in (3.1–3.2) indicate that AANN and the pseudopartitive have a similar syntax and identical properties. It therefore seems not only reasonable, but desirable, to seek a structural analysis of AANN which aligns it with the structure of the pseudopartitive. First, however, we must tackle the controversial question: what *is* the structure of the pseudopartitive? I turn to this problem in the next section.

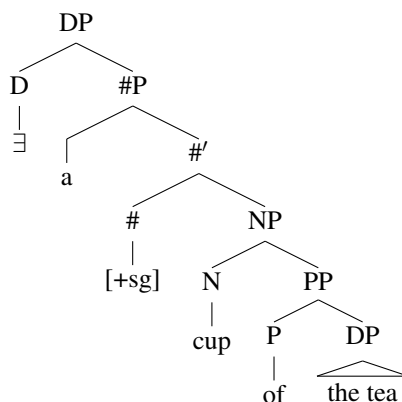
4 Structuring the Pseudopartitive

That the partitive and the pseudopartitive represent two syntactically distinct constructions has been argued by many different scholars over the past several decades.⁸ A perennially popular analysis holds, on the basis of extraposition and relative clause tests like those discussed in Section 3.1 above, that the ‘true’ partitive structure contains two separate DPs, while the pseudopartitive consists of only a single DP. The two-DP analysis of the partitive is straightforward and uncontroversial; a typical version of this structure is shown below.⁹

⁸See Keizer (2007) and especially (Stickney, 2010, ch.3) for a detailed synopsis of this history.

⁹The structures in (16) and (17) are borrowed, with slight revisions, from Stickney (2010). I have modified these and subsequent structures slightly to allow for an analysis of *a(n)* as the Specifier to #P. Stickney’s original structures show *a(n)* as a D-head.

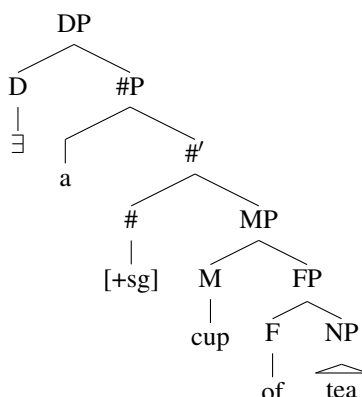
(16)



Providing a satisfactory single-DP account of the pseudopartitive is more challenging, however. Two problems arise: (i) a pseudopartitive phrase like ‘a cup of tea’, if monoclausal, would appear to contain two separate NPs: a measure NP (‘cup’) and a substance NP (‘tea’). Multiple NPs are typically disallowed within a single DP except in the case of local conjunction (e.g., *the cats and dogs*); no such conjunction occurs here. Additionally, (ii), the pseudopartitive DP appears to contain a PP which selects a bare NP—a move which is generally disallowed in DP languages.¹⁰

One recent attempt to produce a monophrasal analysis of pseudopartitives within current theory can be found in Stickney (2010). Her pseudopartitive structure is shown in (17):

(17)



This structure differs in several salient ways from its partitive counterpart in (16). It boasts a semi-lexical measure phrase (MP) in place of the first fully-lexical (measure) NP, and a functional phrase (FP) in place of the partitive PP. These two structural changes allow the structure in (17) to retain its status as a simple noun phrase. Rutkowski (2007), building off of (an earlier version of) Stickney’s work, suggests that the pseudopartitive structure shown here develops over time from a full-blown partitive structure, through a grammaticalization process by which various elements in the construction (specifically the measure noun and the connecting preposition) become semantically reduced and lose their full lexical/prepositional status. Ultimately, in the fully-developed pseudopartitive, the measure noun is essentially a modifier, and the preposition is a reduced functional element.¹¹ Stickney likens this ‘reduced, functional’ use of the preposition *of* to similar treatments of other English prepositions—consider the use of the complementizer *for* in C⁰ or infinitival *to* in I⁰, for instance.

¹⁰Although some hybrid DP/NP theories allow this sort of selection, as for example Chierchia (1998). Adopting such an analysis would result in additional problems for the pseudopartitive; I shall pass over this possibility in the present account.

¹¹In fact, in many languages this preposition, although obligatorily present in true partitives, is entirely absent in pseudopartitives—see Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001). Even in English, where most pseudopartitives retain overt ‘*of*’, certain pseudopartitives treat this element as optional or ungrammatical: *a couple (of) hours*; *a dozen (*of) roses*.

The structure in (17) brings us a long way towards establishing a structural explanation for the pseudopartitive's monophrasal behavior. However, as it stands now, this structure is unable to accommodate fully the data we have been considering so far. Specifically, this structure is unable to accommodate low-number partitives, of the type introduced earlier and repeated in (18):

- (18) a period of three days

We saw in Section 3 that partitive-type phrases with low numerals behave like pseudopartitives with respect to standard syntactic tests; however, there is no room for this low numeral in the structure in (17) as it stands now. Indeed, Stickney explicitly argues for the location of #P above MP, citing examples like *twenty cups of tea* to demonstrate that there must be a site for numerals outside the Measure Phrase in pseudopartitives (Stickney 2010:48). Clearly, we also need a landing site for numerals *within* MP.

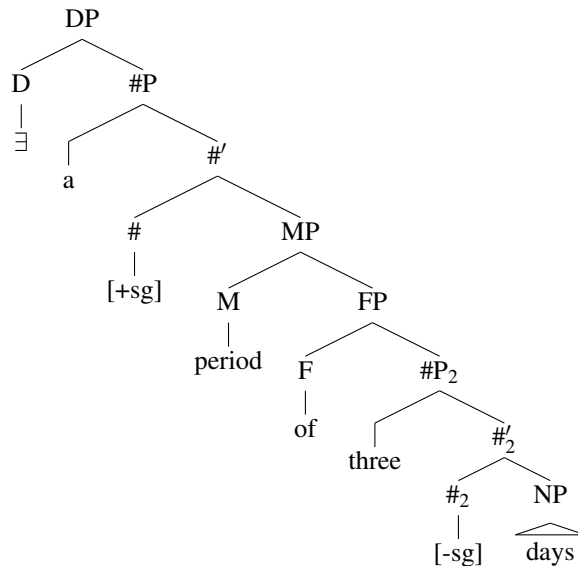
In fact, even without taking examples like (18) into account, postulating the existence of number-related functional apparatus below MP in pseudopartitives seems unavoidable. Consider the following pseudopartitive phrases:

- (19) a. a box of fudge / a box of chocolates
b. boxes of fudge / boxes of chocolates

In these four phrases, the number of the measure noun varies between singular and plural, and the number of the substance noun varies between mass and plural. Since both singular and plural measure nouns can take both mass and plural substance nouns, it is clear that the value for NUMBER of the latter cannot be dictated by the value for NUMBER of the former. If we assume that the presence of number morphology indicates the presence of a syntactic phrase mediating number on the noun, then we must conclude that a pseudopartitive contains two such structures—two #Ps—one directly above MP, mediating number on the measure noun, **and a second one directly above NP, mediating number on the substance noun.** Once a second such phrase is present in our syntactic structure, it provides a straightforward merge point for low numerals within pseudopartitives, such as the one in (18).

I propose the following modification to Stickney (2010)'s pseudopartitive structure:

- (20) 'a period of three days'¹²



Adding a low #P to the basic pseudopartitive structure allows us to account not only for overt low numerals in pseudopartitives and independent variation of atomicity and plurality between M⁰ and

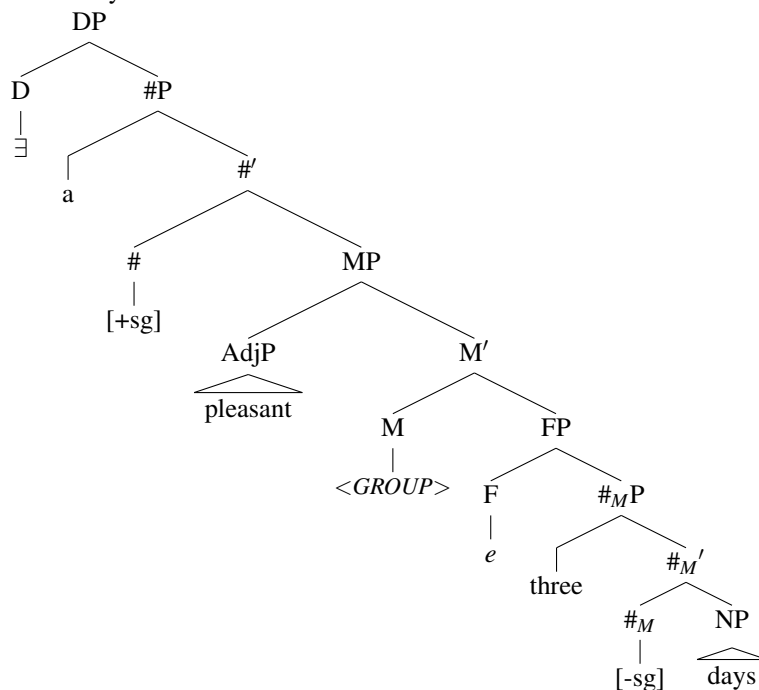
¹²Although the evidence discussed here shows that at least *some* pseudopartitives must allow low numerals, it is not necessarily true that *all* pseudopartitives must contain this second #P. In particular, pseudopartitives like '*a kilo of apples*' do not seem to allow numeral modification in the low NP (**a kilo of three apples*), which may indicate that they lack this low number structure, or at least that this structure is semantically impoverished somehow. See Scontras (2012) for discussion of pseudopartitives of this type.

N^0 , but will also open up a means to account for the otherwise-inexplicable co-occurrence of the singular article and plural numeral which is the hallmark of the AANN construction. I turn to a discussion of the structure of AANN in the final section of this paper.

5 Structuring AANN

I began this paper by documenting several striking idiosyncrasies of the AANN construction; specifically, we saw that this construction (i) contains an obligatory adjective; (ii) allows (and insists upon) the co-occurrence of a singular article and a plural numeral/noun phrase; (iii) selects for measure-type nouns; and (iv) encodes collectivity. We then saw that in many ways, the AANN construction resembles a **collective pseudopartitive**: its most semantically-accurate paraphrase is in the form of a pseudopartitive, it behaves like a pseudopartitive with respect to a number of syntactic tests, and it possesses several idiosyncratic properties in common with pseudopartitives (variable agreement; obligatory article agreement with $N1$, even when $N1$ is covert; lack of the element ‘*of*’). We are now in a position to slide AANN into the syntactic structure we have motivated for the pseudopartitive, and see how these various idiosyncrasies fall out:

- (21) ‘a pleasant three days’



Each element of AANN has a specific place in the structure in (21). The article, of course, goes in the higher #P, while the plural numeral goes in the lower #P. The FP, which hosts *of* in (some) ordinary pseudopartitives, is unpronounced in AANN. This is expected, since the role of the preposition is to act as a Case marker between two overt nominals; in this case, the upper nominal is unpronounced, so there is no need for an overt mediating element. Between the upper #P and FP is the pseudopartitive Measure Phrase, the head of which is covert in this structure. It contains the light noun GROUP, which has been elided. The collective content of M^0 remains, however, and affects the semantics of the subsequent number+noun phrase: this phrase is interpreted as a collective plural.

Postulating a covert GROUP M^0 in this structure not only allows us to explain the collective reading and the dual singularity/plurality of the construction, but it also gives us a way to account for the obligatory adjective preceding the numeral. I propose that this adjective is located in the Specifier to MP position, where its presence is required in order to license the empty M^0 . This proposal is in the spirit of Bernstein (1993) and Kester (1996), who term this phenomenon Specified Nominal Ellipsis (SNE). This type of ellipsis takes place in the absence of an antecedent, and permits a light or ‘de-

fault' noun to be elided under the condition that it is licensed by a modifying place-holder adjective. The most common type of SNE in English involves the ellipsis of plural, generic human nouns: 'the rich (*people*)', 'the poor (*people*)', the French (*people*)'. According to Kester (1996), the noun *people* can be elided in these cases because its features are the minimal default features for humanity ([+human, +generic, +plural]). Similarly, the elided noun in the AANN construction is a minimal, default measure word indicating GROUP or UNIT. The preceding adjective stands in place for this noun; because of its position, it modifies the **empty collection M⁰ itself**, rather than the low noun phrase, and thus contributes a 'collective' or group reading to the construction as a whole.^{13 14 15}

This analysis also sheds light on the predilection of descriptive AANN to select *measure*-type nouns in the low NP: words like *days*, *weeks*, *miles*, *inches*, *courses*. Such 'measure' nouns occur naturally in collectives, whereas concrete nouns need to be overtly grouped; in the absence of an overt collectivity-denoting M-head, the collective force of M⁰ is more natural, and hence more recoverable, when the plural entity which it selects is inherently measurable. There is also a syntactic argument in support of the preference of descriptive AANN for measure-type nouns. Consider a couple of (infelicitous) examples of AANN used with a concrete noun:

- (22) a. #a delicious three muffins
b. #a beautiful three women

If we expand these phrase into pseudopartitives, we see that they are infelicitous because the adjective in these phrases is in the wrong place, and therefore modifying the wrong element:

- (23) a. (i) #a delicious set of three muffins ~ (ii) a set of three delicious muffins
b. (i) #a beautiful group of three women ~ (ii) a group of three beautiful women

If we merge the adjective low in the structure, directly above NP, then we derive the felicitous pseudopartitives in (23a.ii–b.ii). These phrases are not suitable candidates for AANN reduction, however, since the low adjective is not located in Spec,MP, and therefore will fail to license the empty M⁰ by SNE. If, on the other hand, we merge the adjective higher up, within or above the MP itself, then we derive (23a.i–b.i). SNE would be syntactically viable for these structures, but they are semantically infelicitous: it is now the group that is beautiful, rather than the women, and the set that is delicious, rather than the muffins.¹⁶

6 Conclusion

In this paper, I have exploited the intuitive relationship between the AANN construction '*a pleasant three days*' and the pseudopartitive construction '*a pleasant period of three days*' to develop a

¹³There are various ways to formalize the notion of 'group'-hood; one possible avenue would be to adopt Landman (1989)'s Group semantics, which postulates a semantic collectivity feature that selects a (plural) set consisting of a number of entities, and returns a singleton set consisting of a single plural entity. I am not concerned in this paper with the semantic details of this proposal.

¹⁴I alluded early in this paper to another type of AANN, termed 'emphatic AANN', where the adjective seems to modify the numeral rather than the whole noun phrase, and where no collective reading is produced:

- (1) Charles consumed an incredible THIRTY hotdogs at the food-eating contest.
(2) Terry Fox ran an astonishing THREE THOUSAND miles on one leg.

In this case, the underlying phrase is a *quantity* pseudopartitive, rather than a *collective* pseudopartitive; the elided measure word is thus NUMBER, rather than GROUP. In fact, it is probable that there are three types of AANN paraphrases available for pseudopartitives, corresponding to elision of the light measure words GROUP, NUMBER, and AMOUNT. See Keenan 2012 for details.

¹⁵Kayne (2002) argues on independent grounds for the existence of the covert light nouns NUMBER and AMOUNT in English and French.

¹⁶In fact, some speakers accept the structures in (23a.i–b.i) with the meaning of (23a.ii–b.ii); the possibility of adjective raising may account for the availability of this reading, as Stickney (2010) suggests. However, even for speakers who accept (23a.i–b.i), the AANN constructions in (22) remain unacceptable. Presumably, in order to license empty M⁰ by SNE, it is insufficient for an adjective to have moved into the licensing site; it must have been merged there.

syntactically and semantically satisfactory account of the AANN construction. I have proposed that **AANN is, underlyingly, a pseudopartitive**—specifically a collection pseudopartitive, in which the semantically-reduced Measure head ‘*group*’ has been elided by Specified Nominal Ellipsis, leaving a telltale obligatory adjective to mark its place.

Simply by appealing to a pseudopartitive structure for AANN, the idiosyncratic properties of this construction described in Section 2 can be accounted for: **obligatory A-A-N-N order** follows as a necessary result of the internal structure of the pseudopartitive DP; **co-occurrence of the indefinite article and plural numeral** is accounted for by the presence of two separate #Ps in pseudopartitives, a structural idiosyncrasy motivated in this paper; **obligatoriness of the adjective** is a telltale symptom of SNE taking place on the M^0 ; **variable verbal agreement** follows directly from AANN’s status as a (covert) pseudopartitive; and the **collective reading & preference for measure nouns** are derived from the ‘grouping’ function of the covert collective Measure head.

By positing covert pseudopartitive functional structure between the article and the numeral, we are able for the first time to account for the idiosyncratic properties of this mysterious singular-plural construction without compromising our ability to rule out straightforwardly ungrammatical singular-plural examples like *a one day, a two days, a three days*.

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